programmes. The proposed national programme would focus on two objectives, namely increasing the forest cover and density as a whole of the country and conserving biodiversity.

Ecological balance

1901. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of automobiles is going to increase alarmingly in coming years;

(b) if so, projections for the next five years;

(c) whether Government has considered its impact on the environment particularly in Metros;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps being taken to ensure that ecological balance is not disturbed which may be detrimental to health of people living in Metros?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) As per the latest data available, the total number of registered vehicles in the country as on 31st March, 2004 was 7,27,17,935. The number of registered motor vehicles had steadily increased at an average rate of 10% per annum during the years 1994-2004. With this rate of increase, the number of motor vehicles by the year 2012 is expected to be around 15,58,77,349.

(c) and (d) The Government has not carried out any specific study on the impact of vehicular pollution on the environment, however, ambient air quality in all metros is monitored regularly by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in collaboration with State Pollution Control Boards. The air quality monitoring is done in respect of oxides of nitrogen, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter. The data on ambient air quality in metros are available on the website of CPCB.

(e) Various steps taken by the Government to ensure that ecological balance is not disturbed are mentioned below:—

- Bharat Stage III emission norms have been made applicable in 11 mega cities, namely, National Capital Region, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad/Secunderabad, Kanpur, Pune, Surat and Agra) ***w.e.f.*** 01.04.2005 whereas Bharat Stage II emission norms have been made applicable in rest of the country. These norms would be made stricter ***w.e.f.*** 01.04.2010.
- Pollution Under Control norms for in-use vehicles have been made stricter ***w.e.f.*** 01.10.2004
- Restriction on the entry of trucks as well as interstate buses during peak traffic timings.
- Diversion of all interstate trucks and buses through by-pass roads thereby reducing congestion in the main city.

- Augmentation of infrastructure *i.e.* construction of flyovers, bridges, road networks and broadening of existing roads.
- Introduction of Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS) in Delhi for the segregation of the traffic mix and uniform flow of the traffic.
- Restriction on entry of vehicles in very crowded market places like Chandni Chowk and Karol Bagh in Delhi.
- Procurement of state-of-art violation detection equipment system like vehicle speed detection cameras *etc.*
- Implementation of bus lane system and automated toll collection for buses.
- Regular conduction of mass awareness programme for encouraging public transport system, car pooling and fuel saving tips.
- Augmentation of mass rapid transport system (MRTS) all over the country in time-bound manner.

Tiger population

1902. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has entrusted to the CBI the probe into the dwindling tiger population due to poaching in some States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the progress achieved, so far, in this direction; and

(d) the steps being taken by Government to improve the tiger population in each State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) to (c) The CBI was entrusted by the Government of India to investigate the disappearance of tigers from Sariska in 2005. Time and again, advisories have been sent to some tiger States, for handing over the investigation of tiger poaching cases to CBI, considering their ramification beyond State level.

(d) Steps taken by the Government of India are given in the Statement.

Statement

Steps taken by the Government of India for protection and conservation of tigers

Legal steps

1. Amendment of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 for providing enabling provisions for constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau. The punishment in cases of offence within a tiger reserve has been enhanced. The Act also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that has been used for committing any wild life offence.